

Commission to Study OHRV Use in New Hampshire
MEETING Minutes Friday January 2026, 10:00 AM
DNCR
172 Pembroke Rd, Concord, NH

Present:

Mike Ouellet, Chairman, Representative, Coos County District 3
Abby Evankow, Clerk, NHRTC remote
Senator Rochefort, District 1
Arnie Davis, Representative, RRD Committee
Allison Knab, Representative, RRD Committee, remote
Mike Eastman, NH F&G
Craig Rennie, BOT
Gary Newfield, NHACC
Claude Pigeon, NCC
Steven Wilkie, NHOHVA
Ray Gorman, NHMA
Ann Davis, NH TOA / NH FBF
Dan Bennett, NHADA

Absent:

George Sykes, Representative, House Transportation Committee
Matthew Amatucci, NH State Police
David Rodrigue, DOT excused

Vacant:

NH Association of Chiefs of Police
Forest Society/AMC/TNC representative

Guests – in person: Terry Lambert, NHOHVA secretary, Matt Leahy, SPNHF policy director
Guests – remote: Richard Parsons, NHOHVA lobbyist; Jay O’Leary, NHADA lobbyist; Tom Prasol, Kalkomey Enterprises

ACTION ITEMS:

1. Chairman Ouellet has contacted Pittsburg Police Chief Dube to fill seat for NH Association of Chiefs of Police.
2. Chairman Ouellet will email commission’s annual report to everyone by end of the weekend (January, 19, 2026).
3. Ms. Evankow will confirm 30-minute Teams presentation on impact of loud noise on human health by Dr. Michael Osborne for start of March 13 meeting.
4. Include discussion of abutter notification on agenda. Ms. Evankow will send latest proposal to all members of the study commission.
5. Develop Best Management Practices (BMPs) for tire pressure.
6. Capt. Eastman to review 29-minute safety video created by Kalkomey Enterprises and provide summary for the commission.

7. Matt Leahy of the Forest Society to find replacement for Paul Doscher who served as the rep for Forest Society, AMC, and TNC on the HB 1188 commission.

Call to Order 10:00;
Pledge of Allegiance;
Introduction of Guests

Approval of Minutes from September 19, 2025; unanimously approved; November 21, 2025, approved with one abstention (Ann Davis was absent from the November 21, 2025, meeting).

Call to Order
Pledge of Allegiance
Introduction of Guests
Approval of Minutes from November 21, 2025, meeting new business?

NHOHVA Update: Mr. Wilkie requests recording the meetings, suggesting AI minutes, noting the need for human review. AI can misattribute speaker - so speaker should be recognized by name and title. Commission votes to record meeting and launch AI; all in favor.

Mr. Wilkie is trying to educate about machines and terminology. To NHOHVA “Abutter” means someone who lives along a trail; “landowner” allows OHRVs on their land. The September minutes mixed up these terms.

The definition of OHRV is very broad. This commission discusses ATV, UTV and trail bike. A Trials bike has no seat, but still needs to be registered. These distinctions make a difference for state land vs. private land. Most municipalities open their roads to “OHRV” so no weight or width restrictions. Maine calls everything ATV - even dirt bikes, now trying to re-define oversized ATVs. NY also trying to define an UTV. These states look to NH for guidance. VT allows 72” ATV, 2500 lbs. It is up to landowner what they want to allow. NY wants 80” wide, 2,000 lbs for UTV. Per NH definition - UTV is manufactured for off-road use. A stripped down Jeep Cherokee w/ new tires is still a Jeep, not an UTV. Trials bike is not Trail Bike by NH definition - is registered as “other” OHRV. He has previously shared an information sheet that compares weight and tire pressure.

Some riders are putting high pressure DOT tires on their side by sides, resulting in more impact on trails. Side by side Off road tires are typically 12-18 lbs of pressure, compared to 30lb+ psi for DOT tire pressure. Low pressure tires disperse weight better than high pressure.

Rep Ouellet: What happens when replace Off Road tire w/ DOT tire but with reduced pressure? Some truck tires are made for both on and off-road riding - pressure can be reduced for trail riding, minimizing damage to trails.

Mr. Wilkie - I’m not sure if we are ready to draft law to address keeping on-road tires off trails.

Why would someone substitute tires? Rep Ouellet: DOT tires are safer than off-road tires when riding on roads at 12 lbs pressure. A DOT tire can be a trail tire at low pressure. Softer off-road tire wears a lot quicker up north - so switching to DOT tires from off-road.

Mr. Wilkie: on-road tires have more trail impact than vehicle weight, which is why NHOHVA has voted 2x to eliminate the weight limit from the UTV definition. Maine lost about 15,000 registrations when they eliminated the kind of machines eligible for registration. Defender UTVs

weight more because they come w/ heat and air conditioning. He recommends focusing on tire pressure, not weight

Mr Pigeon Claude: suggests that determining a fixed ground pressure, psi, would negate discussion about weight.

Mr. Wilkie will be researching tires. 15 years ago there was nothing but knobby tires, which were really loud on roads and square. Manufacturers are coming out with smoother, quieter tire patterns for their Off Road tires.

Mr. Rennie: recommends creating Best Management Practice for air pressure, rather than a Rule or RSA; educate, not legislate. BOT and NHOHVA can post on their websites.

Mr Pigeon: suggests comparing what happens at 10 lbs; 20 lbs; 40 lbs pressure.

Mr. Ouellet: reminds we must consider safety, must consider side wall flex.

Ms. Evankow asks what is the percentage of road riding versus trail riding that someone would want to switch to dot tires from trail tires; what percentage of Rep Ouellet's OHRV riding made him decide it was safer to go to DOT tires instead of soft walled trail tires?

Coos County has a lot more road travel than anywhere else. Rep Ouellet not like side wall flex on warm asphalt at 30 mph, DOT tires have stiffer sidewall.

Mr. Wilkie has asked the clubs how many miles of trails are class IV & V roads, vs. woods trails, but has not received answers.

Rep Ouellet points out that NH has set standards re: OHRVs, i.e. passed bill to require rear view mirror. Thinks we can lead the way on tires and pressure.

Mr. Wilkie: law states 20mph maximum for OHRVs on municipal roads. but 35mph on state road connectors. Sway bar makes safer for roads now, but some riders remove them to have articulation for the trails.

Captain Eastman: this conversation does not apply to Montana plates; can not enforce Montana law in NH.

Mr. Wilkie emailed the commission machine specification in September, he will send again.

Legislative Update:

HB113: opening certain state roads in Windsor to OHRVs. Is back to Resource, Recreation and Development Committee; no more action this year; working on details w/ town; hoping for bipartisan support.

HB 1140: enabling certain disabled persons to hunt from a motor vehicle. Captain Eastman concerned w/ the definition of disabled and the loosening the requirement from written permission to verbal. Rich Parsons as NHOHVA lobbyist provides weekly updates which are then posted on the NHOHVA webpage.

HB 1058: Allowing to carry a loaded firearm on an OHRV on private property. F&G commission opposed. Instead of written permission this requires only verbal permission.

Captain Eastman questions why this is needed; he would be more comfortable w/ resident / owner component included in the bill, but to drive from house to range w/a loaded long gun is a safety issue.

Rep Ouellet reminds all that NH is constitutional carry state. So if I've got a sidearm on my ATV I can ride legally loaded, but as it is right now, if it's a long gun, it follows the same as motor vehicles, so I can carry a gun, but it can't not be loaded.

Correct. OK. And HB 1058 is trying to change it so that be loaded.

What if a rider wants loaded long gun but property owner says no? This is very hard to enforce.

Isn't law to protect game? What is original intent? Can not hunt from motor vehicle. Captain Eastman sees the real issue as safety; does not understand urgency for this. What does this do for landowner liability law? Mr. Wilkie points out that OHRV language includes jeep / truck and thus complication.

Ms. Davis: NHTOA, Farm Bureau have problems w/ bill as written, from safety, and landowner. Written permission preferable.

Rep Knab: concerned about implied permission. For the snowmobile version of this bill, the sponsor gave an example of inviting someone to tea. Inviting someone to snowmobile on their land does not necessarily mean they want you to bring a loaded long gun.

NHOHVA voted no position. Mr Pigeon wants to go on record basically saying that we find the bill to be ambiguous and lacking clarity.

Mr. Bennett sees commission's duty to promote responsible riding and this bill looks like a risk to property owners and thus against commission's mandate. Mr. Rennie is concerned about losing trails b/c of landowner liability concerns.

Mr. Pigeon's makes a motion that the Commission needs more clarity less ambiguity to support this bill. Ms. Evankow 2nds

Yes votes: Ms Davis, Ms. Evankow, Mr. Pigeon, Mr. Newfield

No votes: Mr. Bennett, Rep. Davis, Mr. Gorman, Rep. Ouellet, Senator Rochefort

Abstain: Capt. Eastman, Rep. Knab, Mr. Rennie, Mr. Wilkie,

Results: 4 yes; 5 no; 4 abstain.

HB 1074: extending the time period for the remission of certain OHRV and snowmobile fees

Captain Eastman understands this has a housekeeping bill but does not remember the F&G Commission's position on this.

HB 1095: increasing the maximum weight of utility vehicle utility train vehicle to 3000 lbs. Rep Ouellet explains this was put in just to make the definition legal to allow for electric battery powered ATV's on the trails

Ms. Evankow asks if there's really a demand and points out it is unenforceable. Mr. Bennett says his dealer feedback is that consumer demand is incredibly limited, there is lack of faith in the product and limited use for them. One dealer has sold one EV. He feels 2000 lbs could be tweaked because of the current product mix, but 3000lbs is too high. The dealers are concerned about not opening up to jeeps, defenders and larger vehicles on the trails. Ms Davis asks if no demand - why is there a bill? This bill not promulgated by ADA.

Mr. Wilkie: this applies to side by sides with enclosed sides with heat and AC - these are over 2000 lbs, under 65." That is where the demand is. Polaris Expedition too heavy. Mr Bennett suggests 2500 lb.

Ms. Davis: increasing the weight from 2,000 - 3,000 lbs is a significant percentage increase and asks does increasing allowed weight lead to more trail damage? Mr. Wilkie: there are probably hundreds of them already out there on the trails and they are dealing w/ any impact. He explains that an aggressive ATV rider can tear up a trail more than a heavier side by side which is going to go more slowly because it is tipper. Wider tires are on the bigger, heavier machines. Trail damage is not necessarily a function of the weight of the vehicle; it's the resulting ground pressure.

Captain Eastman: the Fish and Game Commission opposes this bill - concerned about the landowners program and it is unenforceable. Officers can enforce width, not weight. When you put more weight on something that can only be 64" it gets less stable.

Mr. Rennie: there's not a lot of current market demand for electric OHRVs, but he sees excitement about it - there are a lot of one-wheeled, EVs on the trails. It is good planning for future,

Rep Davis sees this as housekeeping bill. There are already overweight vehicles out there, this will bring them into compliance.

Mr. Wilkie: We're really talking about the side by sides with heat and AC. BOT eliminated the weight limit in the rules for southern trails. Clubs use boulders and gates to enforce width limits; state uses gates.

Ms. Davis: It is more honest to say heavier vehicles are out there, and not use EV as the reason.

It is housekeeping and future electric, not significant and doesn't change anything.

Rep Knab: the last bill regarding weight had opposition from TOA and FB - is that still the case now?

Ms. Davis: we have not come to a decision on that yet.

Captain Eastman: got call from hunter upset that he could not ride his mini truck on the Presidential Rail Trail to get to his favorite hunting spot.

Mr Newfield: what might be the unintended consequences? Manufacturers are already making 72" & larger machines.

Rep Davis: asks sponsors to make amendment

Mr. Wilkie stated 20% of trails are maintained by NH BoT and the rest by OHRV Clubs

Mr. Rennie,- high weight + high pressure tires = damage, 2000 lbs + UTV must be manufactured or adapted for off-road,

Senator Rochefort: Commission is charged w/ studying OHRV use, does not see authority to comment on pending legislation - going : Knab - our committee was looking for commission comment

Rep Knab: The Resources Committee always asks the question “where’s the recommendation of the 1188 Committee?”

HB 1188 language includes “current statutes”, “all other business”

Mr. Wilkie makes a motion: to eliminate weight limit in definition of UTV. Rep Davis 2nds.

Discussion: this vote is a recommendation only, the legislators will decide. This does not address Mr. Rennie’s concern about tire pressure, but the vehicles must follow UTV definition made for or adapted for off-road- Rennie: bill should reference definition

Yes votes: Rep. Davis, Mr. Gorman, Mr. Newfield, Mr. Pigeon, Rep. Ouellet, Senator Rochefort, Mr. Wilke

Abstain: Mr. Bennett: not enough detail yet – preemptive; Ms Davis: want to check w/ TOA and NHFB on amendment; Captain Eastman: F&G commission would have to review new language; Ms Evankow; Rep. Knab: it’s coming before the RRD committee; Mr. Rennie: needs ruling by BOT legislative committee

Results: 7 yes; 6 abstain

HB 1037 Extending the HB1188 commission

NHOHVA supports - acknowledges the challenges, but sees value of having everyone at the table, especially tourism, so wants a seat on the commission added for Travel and Tourism.

SB 505: re: repealing temporary registration.

Captain Eastman: NH sells 3800+/year, but it has a lot of loopholes. One rider can buy multiple temporary registrations instead of buying full registration. The temporary registrations was supposed to be 3 year pilot. We are losing money that would go to trails the money from these registrations go to administration, none to trail maintenance. Maine has a temporary registration, but the price is very close to a year-round registration- so there is no benefit to buying 3 as they are doing in NH. Temporary registrations are also problems for agents who sell them and for law enforcement. Repealing the temporary registration will benefit state.

Mr. Bennett: will we disincentivize from riding in NH?

Senator Rochefort: comfortable we are not going to lose riders. Talked w/ Rich Parsons - it is a longer ride to Maine than NH for comparable riding just to save a few dollars.

Rep Ouellet: riding in West Virginia it costs \$50 for permit per person, not machine. He does not consider the cost of the permits when planning his trips. It’s the same for Ride the Wilds. When

someone is driving a \$60,000 truck, \$25,000 trailer, \$25,000 machines - what's a \$100 registration fee?

Mr. Wilkie: One season pass might encourage more visits and more tourist dollars. Tourists spend more money than residents. The temporary registration is a pain for registration agent, too complicated. Jan 21 hearing. any opposition?

Mr. Wilkie - motions for the Commission to support SB 505. Mr. Gorman 2nds

Yes votes: Ms Davis, Rep. Davis, Capt. Eastman, Ms Evankow, Mr. Gorman, Rep. Knab, Mr. Newfield, Rep. Ouellet, Mr. Pigeon, Mr. Wilkie

Abstain: Mr. Bennett, Mr. Rennie

Senator Rochefort: (left the meeting before the vote)

Results: 10 yes; 2 abstain

HB 1074: extending the time period for the remission of certain OHRV and snowmobile fees

Captain Eastman understands this as a housekeeping bill but does not remember the F&G Commission's position on this.

LSR 26-3158: registration fee for bicycles & ebikes on state or municipal trails

LSR 26-2527 subjecting certain motor vehicles to rooms & meals tax

Law Enforcement Update

Captain Eastman: every year we run the percentages for how officers use their time.

Regular time enforcement time: 17% goes to OHRV; only 10% goes to Search and Rescue.

Online OHRV registration platform is going well, with only one complaint - about not getting registration in mail. 1000 registrations sold since October 1st launch. In comparison - other registration venues have sold 24,000 snowmobiles since May. They are looking to change to an instant registration w/ receipt that is good for 20 days until the decal arrives in the mail. This will change enforcement - officers are not going to chase down machines with no registration. The Vendor is charging \$17,000 for this change to instant registration. Captain Eastman found some surplus monies to use and unused grant funds.

It is time to look at safety again. Kalkamy offers online safety education. Considering a 29 minute mandatory online class that would cover laws, operation and etiquette. This is working in western states. Captain Eastman looked at Utah's on-line education and found not much on operation, but more telling riders to not ride off trail.

Rep Davis: are registration decals falling off? Captain Eastman: yes, it is still a problem. He is trying to go back to the original manufacturer. It turns out there are different levels of 3M products and this latest supplier used a lesser 3M product. The state saved \$8000 but got an unsatisfactory product.

Tom Parasol: his company Kalkamy, one of the bigger providers of on-line outdoor safety education. They provide on-line boating exams in almost all 50 states in addition to OHRV education. He will be meeting with Captain Eastman to discuss the desired 29 minute course. Offers to present Kalkamy's work to the Commission.

Trails Bureau Update

Mr. Rennie: our update was pretty much the legislation we are following. Mr. Wilkie and Rich Parson work to post them on the NHOHVA website.

Rep Ouellet: David Rodrique called, saying his earlier meeting did not finish when expected. His absence is excused.

Rep Ouellet reads Paul Doscher's resignation letter from Jan. 8, 2026

Dear Rep. Ouellet,

I write to submit my resignation from the OHRV Study Commission. Over the course of the past few years I have endeavored to attend as many meetings as possible, but it appears that my attendance will continue to be sporadic, due to other obligations and travel plans. Further, I have been frustrated by the lack of progress the commission has made in addressing ongoing issues related to abutter complaints, noise concerns and improvements in the standards for siting OHRV trails relative to the protection of water quality, wildlife habitat, and potential conflicts with other recreational uses.

I am not an opponent of OHRV recreation, and recognize that there are many responsible OHRV users that provide important economic benefits to regions of our state. But I also believe that OHRV use is not always compatible with other forms of outdoor recreation and the state should strive to ensure that conflicts among users are minimized. OHRV policies and programs should do more to recognize the impact of OHRV use on the experience of other users of the outdoors and the rights of private landowners to the peaceful use of their land and homes. I had hopes that the Commission would make more progress toward this goal, but have been disappointed.

I wish you the best and want to express my respect and appreciation to all the other members of the Commission.

I have informed the Forest Society, AMC and Nature Conservancy of my decision and they are working on finding someone to replace me on the Commission.

Sincerely,

Paul Doscher

Mr. Leahy: we have a potential replacement for Mr. Doscher.

Rep Ouellet has contacted Pittsburg Police Chief Dube to fill seat for NH Association of Chiefs of Police. He will email commission's annual report to everyone by end of the weekend

Discussion of 4 electric bike bills, lots of issues - where are they allowed? Trails? Sidewalks? A lot are riding on DNCR trails. If they are registered - where does money go?

Rep Ouellet objects to giving 30 minutes to presentation by Dr. Osborne. Ms. Evankow points out he did not set such standards for earlier presenters.

Ms. Evankow requests abutter notification be put back on agenda. She will resend the latest version.

Ms. Davis: suggests putting action items on the top of the minutes, so the chairman can more easily carry forward old business when crafting the next agenda.

Next Meeting

March 13, 10:00 AM DNRC 172 Pembroke Road, Concord

May 8, 10:00 AM DNRC 172 Pembroke Road, Concord

Adjourn 12:08

Respectfully submitted, Abby Evankow, Clerk